

## The First Wisconsin Cavalry at the capture of Jefferson Davis /

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### THE FIRST WISCONSIN CAVALRY AT THE CAPTURE OF JEFFERSON DAVIS.

BY HENRY HARNDEN.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Henry Harnden was born in Wilmington, Mass., March 4, 1823, of parents descended from the earliest Puritan colonists of that State. He came to Wisconsin in 1852, settling at Sullivan, Jefferson county, where he became a farmer and operated a steam saw-mill. He held several town offices, such as treasurer and justice of the peace, and was locally prominent as an Abolitionist. Upon the outbreak of the War of Secession, he enlisted as a private in the First Wisconsin Cavalry, but soon became a sergeant; then (Jan. 4, 1862) a captain; next, major of the second battalion (May 21, 1864), and a lieutenant-colonel (Jan. 6, 1865); he was, later, promoted to a colonelcy, and brevetted brigadier general. At the close of the war, he was in command of the second brigade, first division (cavalry), of the military division of the Mississippi. General Harnden was a member of the State assembly in 1866, from Jefferson county; later (1866–67), he was financial agent of the State Soldiers' Orphans' Home, at Madison; then (1867–73), United States assessor, and later, for several years, United States collector of internal revenue. He resides in Madison.

Other authorities on the capture of Jefferson Davis, are: Official reports by Colonels Earnden and La Grange, *Wis. Adj. Gen's Report*, 1865, pp. 594–597; correspondence and reports of all Union officers concerned, in *Official Records, War of Rebellion*, series i, vols. xlvii, xlix; both Mr. and Mrs. Davis's accounts, in the latter's *Jefferson Davis: a Memoir* (N.Y., 1890; ii, chap. lxiv; articles by Gen. J. H. Wilson, commander of the Union cavalry, and William P. Stedman, of the Fourth Michigan Cavalry, in *Century Mag.*, xvii, pp.

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586–596; and an article by Col. Burton N. Harrison, C. S. A., one of Davie's party, in *Id.*, v, pp. 130–145.—ED.

After the defeat of Hood's army at Nashville, Tenn., by General Thomas, on December 15–16, 1864, the Union cavalry under Gen. James H. Wilson pursued the retreating Confederates until the remnants of their army escaped across the Tennessee River into Mississippi. Then General Wilson encamped his cavalry at Gravelly Springs and Waterloo, along the line of the Tennessee River, preparatory to the commencement of his great raid through Alabama and Georgia, which resulted in the rout of the Confederate General Forrest and the scattering and capture of the greater part of his army; it also resulted in the capture of Selma and Montgomery, Ala., and Columbus and West Point, Ga., culminating with the capture of Macon, Ga. The First Wisconsin Cavalry were of these forces, and bore a conspicuous part in all that was accomplished, during this, the greatest and most successful cavalry raid of the war. The regiment was in the Second brigade, First division cavalry corps, of the military division of the Mississippi, Army of the Cumberland.<sup>1</sup> The division was commanded by Maj.-Gen. Alexander McD. McCook, the corps by Major-General Wilson, the brigade by Col. O. H. La Grange, and the regiment by Lieut.-Col. Henry Harnden.

<sup>1</sup> The cavalry corps was composed of three divisions of veteran cavalry and three batteries of artillery—total, about 15,000 men. The corps started in at the northwest corner of Alabama, March 22, 1865, and finished up with the capture of Macon, Ga., April 20.

Towards the evening of May 6, 1865, when we were encamped about a mile north of Macon, Ga., I received orders to report to division headquarters. I mounted my horse and rode over, there finding Gen. John T. Croxton in command, in the absence of General McCook. The general informed me that it was reported that Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy, was in South Carolina, making his way south into Georgia; that a portion of his cabinet were with him, and that they were accompanied by 600 or 700 men; that I had been selected to command a detachment of 150 men from the First Wisconsin

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Cavalry, to endeavor to cut him off, and capture him if possible. I inquired if he thought 150 men a sufficient number to take on the expedition. He replied that, in the opinion of General Wilson, it was. He explained that the escort of Davis was greatly demoralized, and many were leaving him; that they would 518 be poorly armed, and it was doubtful if they would fight at all—but. if they should fight, he would risk our being able to take care of them.<sup>1</sup> He said that the country through which our route lay was very poor, and that it would be difficult to subsist a large party, and that we must start immediately and not wait for rations—adding, as I left him, that if there was a fight. and Jefferson Davis should get hurt, General Wilson would not feel very bad over it.

1 In General Wilson's official report, made to the war department, in regard to the capture of Davis, he says: "Upon receiving notice that Mr. Davis was making his way into Georgia, I ordered the general commanding the 1st division, to detail one hundred and fifty men from his best regiment, commanded by his best officer, to go in pursuit of Davis, and in obedience to the order, Gen. Croxton sent Col. Harnden with a detachment from the 1st Wisconsin Cavalry." It will be observed that 150 men of the Wisconsin regiment were sent out to do the same work and to meet the same risks for which whole regiments were in other cases thought to be necessary; and how well they acquitted themselves of the great responsibility, will be shown by the results they accomplished.

I then returned to the camp of my regiment and soon had a detail of 150 men selected, all well armed and mounted. We proceeded through Macon, and crossed the bridge over the Ocmulgee river, and then took a line of march towards Savannah. General Croxton had furnished me with a large map of Georgia, so that I was able to shape my course correctly.

Several regiments were sent off in different directions to intercept Davis, after we had started.

During the night we came to a plantation where there was forage, so we halted and fed our horses. Up to this time, the men had no idea as to where we were going, or for what

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purpose we had been ordered out; but when ready to mount our horses, I made known the object of our expedition. I frankly told them that if we encountered Davis and his escort, they would greatly outnumber us; that they were probably the pick of the Confederate army, and that they would fight desperately—it would be a battle to the death. I added that Jefferson Davis must not be allowed to escape in any event; but as we had never been whipped, 519 I had no fear of being whipped now. All of which was greeted with cheers.

We continued our march all night, and through the next day (May 7) until near evening, when we arrived at Dublin, a considerable town situated on the west bank of the Oconee River. I had sent out scouts at intervals to endeavor to get information in regard to parties who were continually crossing our road, to ascertain if some of these might not be the Davis party; but they always proved to be from Johnston's army, who, having surrendered a short time before to Sherman, were going home on parole. These diversions caused our march to be somewhat delayed. Upon arriving at Dublin, I noticed that the people were considerably excited at our presence; but I caused it be given out that we were establishing courier posts between Macon and Savannah.

We bivouacked on a flat between the town and the river. I had several invitations from gentlemen to take up my quarters at their houses, and for some reason they appeared to be quite anxious I should do so. All of which surprised me, as I had never before been the recipient of such attentions. By some means I got an inkling that a party with wagons had passed through the town that day, though to my questions as to who they were, I got only evasive answers; but I finally concluded it was some sutler from Johnston's army. The town was full of Confederate officers in uniform, and as they stood in groups by themselves, talking, I thought their looks boded no good to us. Politely declining all invitations, I made my bivouac with the command. Being weary with thirty-six hours of duty, twenty-four of which had been spent in the saddle, we threw ourselves upon the ground to sleep.

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For several months I had been served by an old colored man, whom we called "Bill." He had been a slave, and owned by a staff officer of Gen. Braxton Bragg, of the Confederate army. He had often waited upon Bragg, as well as his master; but when the rebels were hustled out of Tennessee by Rosecrans, in 1863, Bill got left behind, and 520 falling in with us, I employed him. He was as homely as a hedge-hog, and a perfect tyrant over other darkies, but to me he was as true as steel, and very intelligent. He happened to be with us on this expedition.

I had scarcely lain down to sleep, when Bill came and touched me. "Colonel! Colonel!" he said, "wake up, I have found a colored man who will tell you something!" "Well, what is it?" I asked. It was as dark as pitch, but I could see the whites of their eyes, and I knew they had some important information to give. The stranger said that Jefferson Davis had been in town that day. I said, "How do you know it was Jeff Davis? What makes you think so?" "Well," he said, "all the gentlemen called him 'President Davis,' and he had his wife with him, and she was called Mrs. Davis." He said they had come over the river on a ferry. They had a number of nice wagons with them, and some fine saddle horses led behind the wagon in which President Davis and his wife rode.

He further said that they were going to dine with Judge Rose (one of the gentlemen Who had been so persistent in urging me to spend the night at his house), but before they could get the dinner ready, they heard something that made the party leave in a hurry, going south on the river road. There was another large party, he said, that did not come over the river. I questioned him closely, and his answers appeared straight, but I was fearful of a trick to send me off on some side track. I said to Bill, "Do you think he is telling me the truth, and that I ought to believe him? Sartin sheer, Kurnel, you kin b'lieve him, he's tellin' ye God's troof!"

It will be seen that if Bill had not been with me, we would have known nothing of Davis having crossed our track; we should have gone the next morning toward Savannah, and

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Davis would in all probability have escaped capture, and got away into Cuba, in company with Judah T. Benjamin and others, or across the Mississippi to Kirby Smith.

To get a little more information, I called up a couple of 521 men, and going down to the ferry interviewed the ferryman as to who he had brought over the river that day, but I could get nothing out of him. He was either too stupid, ignorant, or obstinate to give us any information of importance. I have always been sorry that we did not throw the old scamp into the river, as my sergeant wanted me to.

As soon as we got back to the bivouac, I called up the men to saddle for a march. Lieutenant Hewitt, with thirty men, had been left back at some cross-roads and had not yet come up; so, detailing Lieutenant Lane, with forty-five men, to remain at Dublin and scout from there up and down the river, I, with the rest (seventy-five men), started south in the direction the Davis party was reported to have taken.

It was very dark, and the roads in the pine woods were only trails. We soon became confused, and after wandering around for some time, found ourselves coming into Dublin again. Picking our road once more, and daylight coming (May 8), we struck out on the river road at a rapid gait. Five miles out, we came to Turkey creek, where we found the bridge torn up. While this was being repaired, I strolled up to a log house near by, and questioned the woman whom I found there, in regard to the party who had crossed the evening before. She said a large party had passed, but she did not know who they were. Two of the gentlemen had been in her house and drunk some milk, and she showed me a little scrap of paper which she said they had dropped. I saw it was a piece of a Richmond newspaper, of recent date.

A bright little girl standing by, said she had heard one gentleman call the other "Colonel Harrison," and the other was addressed as "Mr. President." Upon my inquiring as to how they were dressed, she said they were "almost as handsomely dressed as I was, but their coats were not alike." Pointing to my shoulder straps, I enquired if they had such things on

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their coats; she replied no, but one of them had stars on his collar and gold on his sleeves, while the other had plain clothes. The child's description convinced 522 me that one was an officer of high rank, and the other Jefferson Davis. So convinced was I that we were at last really on the track of Davis, that I wrote a dispatch and started a courier with it to General Wilson; but the man was captured by some Confederates, taken into the woods, robbed of his horse and equipments, and left to make his way to Macon on foot—which he did, but not until after my return there.

The bridge being repaired, we again pushed on through the pine woods. The wagon tracks could now be plainly seen, but it soon commenced to rain very hard, and the tracks we had followed were now obliterated. We were in the great pine woods of the South, the soil nothing but white sand, scarcely an inhabitant to be found, and soon we lost all track of the party ahead; but still we pushed blindly on.

I sent parties circling around to find the road, but they were unsuccessful. However, they found a horseman, and brought him to me. In reply to my questions, he said he knew nothing of any party, that he was only a poor citizen hunting some lost sheep. I noticed that he was riding a fine horse. I told him that I would take his horse, and he could hunt his sheep on foot. At this he began to plead earnestly. I told him to quit lying, to tell me where the wagons were that had been somewhere near there the evening before, and I would let him go with his horse.

He then confessed he did know where the party had camped over night, but it was eleven miles away and in another direction entirely from that in which we were headed. "Guide us there," I said. "and you shall have your horse; otherwise you go home on foot." He took us in a westerly direction, to where the Davis party had been in camp, but they were gone.

According to promise, I dismissed the guide and he left in a hurry. We found here a poor plantation and a little forage, which we appropriated from the owner. I inquired where the

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wagon party had gone; he did not know, though 523 he thought they had crossed Gum swamp, but the rains had so raised the water that it would be difficult for us to get through.

“Get your horse,” I said, “and guide us through to the other side, and we will go; otherwise we shall stay and eat you out of house and home.” He then quickly mounted, and led the way through the swamp, where the water for miles was up to the saddles.

Dismissing this guide, we pushed on through the dense woods, over a fairly-plain track, until darkness compelled us to halt for the night, during which there came up a terrible storm of wind, rain, thunder, and lightning. As if to add to our discomfort, several great trees came down with a crash in our vicinity, but our weariness was such that we were disturbed but for a moment.

May 9, as soon as it was light enough to see, we pushed on in a southeast direction, until we struck the Ochmulgee, the same river we had before crossed at Macon. Continuing down this stream some distance, we came to a ferry. In our haste to get over, the boat was damaged so that only a half load of horses could be taken over at a time. This delayed us a couple of hours, when we pushed on a few miles to a little town called Abbeville.

By inquiring we learned that a party with wagons had passed through the town during the night, and that they had gone towards Irwinsville. Halting to feed our horses, we started on the road thither, but just as we were moving out we saw four soldiers in United States uniform, coming down the road from the north. They informed me that they belonged to the Fourth Michigan Cavalry, Lieut. Col. Benjamin D. Pritchard commanding, and that the regiment was near at hand.

Sending on our detachment under Lieutenant George O. Clinton, I rode, accompanied by my orderly,—James Aplin,—to meet Colonel Pritchard. After introducing myself, I inquired if he had any news of Davis. He said he had not, but that he had been ordered with his regiment, to Abbeville, to patrol the river and prevent Davis from 524 crossing. He had left Macon since I had, but up to that time had heard nothing of the fugitive. As his errand was



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the same as mine, I thought it my duty to give him all the information in my possession, in regard to the movements of the latter.

He inquired if I needed any more men; I said I did not, but asked if he could spare some rations, as our party had next to nothing to eat. He said they had marched suddenly, and had nothing. Bidding him good-bye, my orderly and I left, and pushing on overtook our party. We shortly came to the place where the Davis party had lunched. They had left so recently, that their fires were still burning.

We continued to march on until dark, when, coming to a swale where there was water and a little grass, we halted to rest and graze our horses. All we had for rations was a trifle of damaged corn meal. We lay down to rest for a time, but before the break of day (May 10) were again in the saddle.

At this time I felt confident that we were in close proximity to the Davis party, and had only halted so as not to come upon them in the night. I expected that the fugitives would camp on the other side of the river, ahead of us, and I reasoned that if we attempted to cross the ford in the dark, Davis would take the alarm and escape.

Putting forward an advance guard of a sergeant (George Hussey) and six men, with instructions to keep a little ahead, and maintain a sharp lookout, we moved on. We had made but a mite or so, when our advance guard were suddenly fired upon, by what I judged to be twenty or thirty muskets. Galloping forward at the head of ten men, I met the sergeant and his party retreating, with several of his men wounded. He said they had run into the enemy's pickets and had been fired upon. I directed the sergeant to follow, and then dashed on, when we were met with another volley, so close that the fire came right in our faces and the bullets rattled like hail on the trees. I could just see the forms of our assailants, on account of the darkness.

Seeing that they were in considerable force, and determined to stand their ground, I got my men into line, and dismounting a part, we advanced on the enemy. They gave us a third volley, when we opened fire on them, and they retreated into a swamp.

It was now getting light. At this time, one of our party called my attention to about a hundred mounted men who were coming down on our flank. I cried, "Never mind, boys, we'll whip them yet!" Directing Sergeant Hoor, with ten men of Company A, to pursue the party who had fired on us first and retreated, and not to let them rally, I next turned my attention to the new comers, who were between us and the light.

Forming a line facing them, we opened upon our assailants with our repeating rifles (Spencer carbines). They were soon thrown into confusion. I had left part of my men mounted, under Lieutenant Clinton; seeing that the enemy were in disorder, I ordered Clinton to prepare for a sabre charge. Two of the men hearing me, and understanding I had ordered the charge, drew their sabres, put spurs to their horses, and dashed at the supposed enemy. I called them back, being not quite ready, as I wanted to give our footmen time to replenish their magazines. Just as I was about to give the final order to charge, Sergeant Hoor came running up and said we were fighting Union men; that he had captured one of them, and thus ascertained the fact.

At hearing this, I rode in front of our line and shouted "Stop firing!" which soon ceased on both sides. Then going forward, the first man I met was Colonel Pritchard. So surprised was I, that for some time I could not realize that it was he; but as soon as I recognized him, I asked him how it was that he was there fighting us? He explained, that after parting with me the day before, at Abbeville, twenty-five miles distant, and ascertaining from me that Davis had already got across the river, and finding that there was another road to Irwinsville, he had selected 150 of his best men, well mounted, and by marching all night had arrived at Irwinsville before daylight.

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Hearing that a party with wagons was camped a short distance from the town, he had marched out toward it, guided by a negro. He had sent twenty-five men around to the back of the camp, and it was these men who, mistaking us for enemies, had fired upon us so recklessly, with such unfortunate results. He said some of his men had just taken possession of the camp, which was only about fifty yards away. I inquired if Davis had been captured; he answered that he did not know who had been captured, as he had not been to the camp himself.

In this unfortunate affair. two of the Michigan men were killed, and one officer and several men wounded. Of the Wisconsin men, three were wounded, but none killed. We lost a number of horses. I attribute our slight loss to the darkness, and to the fact that as we were on lower ground than our opponents, they overshot us.

Colonel Pritchard and I rode together into the Davis camp, which was just across a little swale, only a few rods from where our skirmish took place. The first person we saw there was John H. Reagan, the postmaster-general of the Confederacy, lately United States senator from Texas, who said to me, "Well, you have taken the old gentlemen at last!"

"Who do you mean?"

"I mean President Davis."

"Please point him out."

"There he stands," said Reagan, pointing to a tall, elderly, and rather dignified-looking gentleman, standing a short distance away.

We rode up, dismounted, and saluted, and I asked if this was Mr. Davis? "Yes," he replied, "I am President Davis." At this the soldiers set up a shout that "Jeff" Davis was captured.

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Up to this time none of the men who actually arrested him, knew that he was Davis. One soldier said, "What! that man Jeff Davis? That's the old fellow who, when I stopped him, had his wife's shawl on."

We—that is, Mr. Davis and I—were the center of a 527 circle composed of Union soldiers and members of the Davis party. In the background, some of our men set up the familiar army song, "We'll hang Jeff Davis on a sour apple tree!" to the tune of "John Brown's Body," which did not add in the least to Davis's comfort.

In the camp were two tents and eight ambulances, each of the latter drawn by four mules. There were also several fine saddle horses. Besides Davis, there were Reagan, Col. Harrison, Mrs. Davis, her sister (Miss Howell), and a number of Confederate officers from Johnston's army, and a lot of teamsters, servants, and others, but no fighting men. It appears that when the fighting began, Davis was sleeping in his tent. Alarmed at the noise, he hastily arose and threw a shawl around him, started out, but meeting a soldier was stopped and ordered back into his tent.<sup>1</sup> He heard the noise of the sharp skirmish, saw the dead and wounded brought in, but knowing that he had no fighting men with him, could not at the time understand what it meant.

<sup>1</sup> It was said at the time, and not disputed, that the soldier's name who cried "Halt!" to Davis, was Munger, a corporal in the Fourth Michigan Cavalry, but he did not then know it was Davis.

I entered into conversation with him, but with little satisfaction to him or me. I would not call him "Mr. President," but always addressed him as "Mr. Davis," which seemed to greatly annoy him, and he retaliated by speaking with the greatest contempt of "Your government."

I said to him that I came very near making his acquaintance back at Dublin, three days before; and if he had fulfilled his engagement to dine with Judge Rose, that I should have

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done so. Upon this he turned upon me with great hauteur, and said, "Well, sir, I can assure you that if you had made my acquaintance then, this thing would not have happened as it has. I had those with me then, who would not have permitted this indignity to have been put upon me. It was well for you, sir, that you were not in time to see me then." I replied that it would have afforded me pleasure to have met his friends and tried the question with them.

Every few moments he would turn away from me, but he would soon come back to the tilt again. He wanted to know if my government authorized me to harass women and children through the country, in the manner I was doing. I replied no, not women and children, but I was sent after him. Then his wrath arose again, and he poured out a torrent of abuse against my government, which was treating him with such indignity.

While conversing with him, I saw a cask of brandy pitched out of an ambulance; the head was soon knocked in, and the soldiers were running thither from all parts, with cups and canteens. I called Colonel Pritchard's attention to it, and said it ought to be stopped, as there might soon be trouble over it. The colonel went over and tried to stop it, but with poor success, I suspect, as the condition of the soldiers soon showed.

Mr. Davis, seeing the way things were being thrown out of the wagons, turned to me and inquired which of us was the ranking officer. As we were both lieutenant-colonels, and rank depended upon the dates of our respective commissions, I replied that I did not know. He meant to inquire which of us was in command, but as he had been insolent, I did not propose to explain to him that we were two separate commands just come together. He then turned to some Confederate officers, and said that things had come to a pretty state of affairs when United States soldiers did not know who their commanding officer was; and that it was no wonder that the privates were plunderers and robbers. After a little more talk, his wrath, which had for some time been rising, got completely the better of him; then he turned his back upon me, for the last time.

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In speaking to his wife he blamed her for the capture, for he said that if he had acted on his own judgment he would have been with the others of his party, and this thing would not have happened as it had. It appeared that 529 she had persuaded him to accompany her a little farther than he had at first intended. Mrs. Davis took him by the arm, and tried to pacify him. She told us to never mind him, that he was not worth minding. She also said, as she was leading him away, that she hoped we would not irritate the president, for some one might get hurt.

After making all allowances for the humiliating position in which Davis found himself at that time, I came to the conclusion that he was a greatly overrated man. His man her, and all that he said, his blaming his wife, and other circumstances, all went to show that he had no real nobility about him. As to the story which became widely prevalent at the time, that Davis had on a hoop-skirt, and was disguised as a woman, I know but very little of it; but think it grew out of the remark of the soldier, that, when he stopped him, he had his wife's shawl on.<sup>1</sup> 34

<sup>1</sup> When I saw him, he wore a common slouched hat, fine boots, no spurs, coat and trousers of light-blue English broadcloth; taking all circumstances into consideration, he was neatly dressed.

When we got back to Macon, General Wilson sent for me and made me tell him all about my pursuit, and the incidents of the capture of Davis. The general insisted upon every particular—as to how he appeared, what he said, how he was dressed, etc. After narrating all, I told him I heard the soldier who halted him say that, when Davis came out of his tent, he had his wife's shawl on. This remark of mine was telegraphed north, and when it came back it had blossomed out into hoop-skirts, petticoats, hoods, and other articles of female apparel. I verily believe that this was all there was to the female apparel story.—H.H.

In *Century Mag.*, xvii, pp. 586–596, General Wilson and William P. Stedman (the latter of the Michigan regiment) both assert the truth of the female-disguise story. Stedman,

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who writes as an eye-witness, thus minutely describes (p. 595) Mr. Davis's appearance: "Out came a tall person with a lady's waterproof overdress on and a small brown shawl on the head, a tin pail on the right arm, and a colored woman leaning on the left arm. This tall person was stooping over as if to appear shorter; I at once concluded that it must be Davis in disguise. \* \* \* A man by the name of Andrew Bee, a Swede, who was cook for Colonel Pritchard, came up on the run, and grabbed both hands into the front of the dress that Davis had on, jerked it open, and said to him, 'Come out of this, you old devil!' Davis at this attack straightened up and showed anger. At the same time he put his hand to his back under his dress. I thought he was after a revolver, and covered him with my carbine, and cocked it. As I did so Mrs. Davis, who stood at the tent door, cried out to me not to shoot. She came running to her husband and threw herself on him in front of the gun. She said that he was not armed, for she had caused him to leave his arms in the tent before he came out. Then Davis threw the dress and shawl to the ground and started for the tent."

Several other details in Stedman's narrative differ materially from those given in General Harnden's account. Colonel Pritchard also gave currency to the story of the disguise, his account being cited and adopted in General Wilson's article, p. 592.— Ed.

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After resting for a short time, caring for the wounded and burying the dead, we all began our return march to Macon, where we arrived the day after, May 12. I first made a verbal report to General Wilson, and received from him his hearty approval of all we had done. We then heard for the first time, that a reward of \$100,000 had been Offered for the capture of Davis.

The war then being over, Pritchard and I were soon mustered out of service,<sup>1</sup> and no military court of inquiry was ever held to determine the responsibility of the collision which resulted so disastrously to several Union soldiers; but General Wilson says, in his official report, that "Col. Harnden was in no way responsible, as he had no means of knowing that the parties in his front were other than enemies."<sup>2</sup>

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1 The First Wisconsin Cavalry was mustered out at Edgefield, Tenn., July 19, 1865.

2 Who was to blame for the collision? Perhaps that is not for me to say, but General Wilson and Colonel La Grange said that I was not. The committee of congress exonerated me. Some attempt was made to place blame on Sergt. George Hussey, who commanded my advance guard, but I exonerated him from any blame, and certify that he acted as a brave and experienced soldier should act, when challenged by an enemy in the dark.

It appears that up to their arrival at Dublin. Mr. Davis was accompanied by his cabinet officers and a considerable escort of Texans; but there they separated, the main part going down the east side of the Oconee River, while the Davis party crossed to the west side and were headed for Mississippi, the home of Mrs. Davis. Davis only intended to keep her company for a day or two longer, then leave 531 her and join the rest of his cabinet on their way to Florida. The led horses were intended for that part of the journey.

What would have happened in ease we had met Davis at Dublin, is only problematical. The Wisconsin troops were veterans, selected from one of the best regiments in the service, all well-armed, mounted, and disciplined; while the Confederates, although in greatly superior numbers, and brave and desperate fighters, were disorganized and discouraged. But that the meeting did not take place, was, in my opinion, well for Davis and his escort—for in the language of Mrs. Davis, “some one would have got hurt.”

I was kept on duty with the First Wisconsin Cavalry down in Georgia, until the following July, when we were marched to Edgefield, Tenn., and mustered out of service. In the meantime, Colonel Pritchard had an opportunity to visit Washington and tell his story, and the consequence was that the whole \$100,000 reward was awarded to the Fourth Michigan Cavalry.

For some unaccountable reason, my official report was delayed in reaching Washington, and for a time I made no claim to any share in the reward, supposing that Davis would



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be tried and executed, and in that case I would not have taken what might be considered blood money; but when it became certain that he was not to be punished,<sup>1</sup> I went to Washington and laid before congress a claim on behalf of the First Wisconsin Cavalry, to a share of the money.

<sup>1</sup> After Davis was brought to Macon, he was sent under guard by the way of Savannah to Old Point, Va., where he was kept a prisoner for several months, being finally released on bail.

A congressional committee was appointed, of which Mr. Washburn of Massachusetts was chairman, to investigate the whole matter. After due consideration, this committee unanimously reported that General Wilson, Colonel Pritchard, Captain Yeoman,<sup>2</sup> and myself should receive \$3,000

<sup>2</sup> Yeoman was captain in an Ohio regiment, who somewhere in the Carolinas fell in with the Davis party, and passing himself off for a Confederate, traveled with them for several days. He it was, who contrived to get the dispatch to General Wilson, at Macon, which caused him to send a number of regiments in different directions to try to head Davis off, with the result of his capture.

532 each, and that the balance should be divided among those who were actually present and took part in the capture, according to rank and pay.<sup>1</sup> The members of each regiment were treated alike. I was exonerated from all blame for the collision.<sup>2</sup> When the bill, as reported, came before the house, every Republican, except the five members from Michigan, voted for it.

<sup>1</sup> It has been stated that Pennsylvania and Illinois troops were present. This is not so: there were none but the First Wisconsin and the Fourth Michigan cavalry regiments.

<sup>2</sup> Endorsement of Gen. O. H. La Grange, made upon the back of Colonel Harnden's report to General Croxton, of the capture of Jefferson Davis, dated Macon, Ga., April 13, 1865:

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"Head Quarters, Second Brigade, First Cavalry Division, M. D. Macon, Ga., May 14th, 1865.

"Respectfully forwarded.

"From this report it appears that Lieutenant Colonel Harnden faithfully discharged his duty, and no blame can attach to him in relation to the unfortunate collision between his detachment and Colonel Pritchard's, which he had every reason to believe remained at Abbeville.

"It is, however, a source of painful regret, that the satisfaction experienced in this consummation is clouded by the knowledge that an act having every appearance of unsoldierly selfishness, in appropriating by deception the fruits of another's labors, and thus attaining unearned success, resulted in unnecessary bloodshed, and a sacrifice of lives, for which no atonement can be made. What may have been intended merely as an act of bad faith towards a fellow soldier, resulted in a crime; and for this closing scene of the rebellion, inglorious in itself, but historic in circumstance, it is difficult to repress a wish that accident had not afforded the Government a representative above suspicion.

(signed) "O. H. La Grange, *Colonel Commanding*."